[Sierra Vista Herald](#)

From Washington, D.C. last week came news that the House passed a bill which will include $400 million to fund the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. This money helps reimburse state and local law enforcement agencies for incarcerating illegal aliens.

Originally, the Obama Administration had planned to cut the money entirely, which would have meant those government entities would have had to cover all of the costs of incarcerating illegal immigrants.

An original subcommittee bill supplied $300 million. An additional $100 million was added as an amendment to an appropriations bill by Democratic U.S. Representatives from Arizona: Gabrielle Giffords, Ann Kirkpatrick and Harry Mitchell.

The measure now goes to the Senate for further action.

Giffords stated in a news release that, "As long as local law enforcement agencies like the Pima and Cochise county sheriff's offices are using their jails to incarcerate illegal immigrants; they should get compensated for it. This is the fair thing to do and my colleagues in the House clearly recognize that."

The initial objections by Giffords, Kirkpatrick and Mitchell to the president's budget proposal prompted an appropriations subcommittee to set aside $300 million for SCAAP. The amendment approved provided an additional $100 million. It was part of a bill that funds the Justice and Commerce departments, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and related agencies.

While the money is useful, it is a drop in the bucket compared to the costs associated with incarcerating illegals. Remember, the $400 million is for the whole nation.

In 2008, the Arizona Department of Corrections received $12.8 million from the federal government in SCAAP funds to house the 5,600 criminal illegal immigrants who were in state prisons. That is only 10 percent of the $124 million the state spent to house illegal immigrant inmates that year.

Still, Arizonans should appreciate the efforts of their representatives to secure some money to help defray these costs.